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THE PAN-AMERICAN POLICY OF JEFFERSON AND WILKINSON

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The desire of President Jefferson to gain the Floridas profoundly influenced his whole attitude towards Napoleon Bonaparte. Early in 1808 this led the emperor to hint that with proper subserviency in regard to past commercial exactions and a future alliance against England the American executive might obtain his long-cherished desire. Armstrong, our minister to France, did not fancy the purpose that seemed to animate the French emperor nor the language in which he expressed it, and advised his government to declare war against either France or England, but in either case to seize the Floridas at once. Jefferson and Madison did indeed publish Napoleon's imperious demand; but at the same time they assumed a mild tone in their instructions to Armstrong that little comported with vigorous action. They likewise instructed him to assure the imperious autocrat that they "had chosen as the basis for their policy a fair and sincere neutrality among the contending Powers," and were unwilling to abandon it "for the purpose of obtaining a separate and particular object, however interesting to them." Yet they might be led by British hostility to preoccupy this territory, and in that case would be pleased to know that "the measure [had] received His Majesty's approbation."¹

Napoleon made his proposal just as he was about to overthrow the Bourbon power in Spain, for the evident purpose of persuading the United States to countenance his later plans in regard to Spanish-America; but his threat and its accompanying bribe proved equally ineffectual. As Madison wrote Armstrong, Great Britain had views upon Spanish-America as well as Napoleon, and was equally interested in the neutrality of the United States. The latter nation could easily stir up a revolution in Spanish-America, but would not do so if well treated by both belligerents. Upon being informed of this assumption of

¹ Henry Adams, *History of the United States* (New York, 1889-1891), 4:293, 306.

neutrality the emperor unblushingly denied the bribe that his ruthless despoiling of Spain had seemed to make possible.²

The famous "Dos de Maio" in Madrid presented to Jefferson another opportunity to realize his wish. That memorable uprising of the Spanish people against their oppressors did not, it is true, greatly arouse Jefferson's sympathy. His "pursuit of Florida," to quote Henry Adams, had enmeshed him too completely for that. Rather, while Bonaparte was occupied with Spain, he anticipated that England would make up with the United States. Then without committing himself to either of the principal contestants he expected to seize West Florida as far as the Perdido as a rightful possession and "the residue of the Floridas" as a reprisal for the spoliations that for years he had vainly urged France and Spain to acknowledge. Thus his policy was an exceedingly selfish one. In carrying it out he proposed to gather his new recruits and armed vessels at points where they would be ready to act, the moment Congress authorized the blow. He thought he already had a sufficient force near Baton Rouge to attend to that post and he must now prepare for the seizure of Mobile, Pensacola, and St. Augustine. The embargo afforded the necessary pretext for massing troops on the St. Mary's and the Tombigbee.³

Early in September Gallatin warned him from New York that, despite the tone of the Washington papers, there was a general feeling in favor of the Spanish patriots.⁴ Yet the president did not abandon his quest for the Floridas, but affected to be puzzled by Armstrong's earlier advice to seize them at once. The tidings of the victories over the French at Bailén and Vimeiro rendered Napoleon less formidable but increased the possibility that England might become the protector of the threatened Spanish colonies. It was with this in mind that the president recorded the determination of the cabinet after its meeting of October 22: "Unanimously agreed in the sentiments which should be unauthoritatively expressed by our agents to influential persons in Cuba and Mexico, to-wit: 'If you remain under the dominion of the kingdom and family of Spain, we are con-

² Adams, *History of the United States*, 4:311.

³ Thomas Jefferson, *Writings* (Ford ed. — New York, 1892-1899), 9:203.

⁴ Jefferson Papers, ser. 3, vol. 7:71.

tented; but we should be extremely unwilling to see you pass under the dominion or ascendancy of France or England. In the latter case, should you choose to declare independence, we cannot now commit ourselves by saying we would make common cause with you, but must reserve ourselves to act according to the then existing circumstances; but in our proceedings we shall be influenced by friendship to you, by a firm feeling that our interests are intimately connected, and by the strongest repugnance to see you under subordination to either France or England either politically or commercially.' ”⁵

It was in keeping with this decision that the president, a week later, answered a communication of William C. C. Claiborne, who as governor of Orleans Territory was in a favorable position to know the sentiments of neighboring Spanish officials. Claiborne had sent him a Spanish paper that savagely attacked the American policy. In part the president replied: “The truth is that the patriots of Spain have no warmer friends than the Administration of the United States, but it is our duty to say nothing for or against either [faction].” After expressing the opinion of the cabinet in regard to Cuba and Mexico, he added: “We consider their interests and ours as the same, and that the object of both must be to exclude all European influence from this hemisphere.” The governor was instructed to express this sentiment to any proper characters from either province and particularly to inform them that the American authorities had “nothing more at heart than their friendship.”⁶

Despite the protest one feels that the Floridas still played an important part in Jefferson’s professed friendship for Spain or her colonies. The contemporary Spanish officials on the imperiled frontier continued to think so and there was much in Jefferson’s subsequent utterances and deeds to justify them. In none does this appear so clearly as in his selection of the envoy to convey his new message of friendliness. His choice fell on General James Wilkinson, a former discredited Spanish pensioner. In this task Wilkinson, the agent, was as thoroughly influenced by personal motives as was Jefferson by the prospect of immediate national gain.

⁵ Adams, *History of the United States*, 4:340.

⁶ Thomas Jefferson, *Writings* (Memorial ed. — Washington, 1903-1904), 12:186.

Wilkinson's first reference to this propaganda occurs in his letter of March 12, 1807, although in this he mentioned Jefferson's earlier desire to occupy Cuba. In his view the United States and Great Britain should combine to preserve the western world from Napoleon and his unwilling ally, the king of Spain. With the aid of the British fleet they could preserve their own territory, occupy Cuba, reduce the Floridas, and give independence to Mexico.⁷ He evidently made this suggestion to conceal from his superior the true character of Walter Burling's mission to Mexico City and to induce the president to pay for it. Later in the same month he suggested that an alliance composed of the independent states of Mexico, Peru, and Cuba might, with the aid of the United States, bid defiance to the Old World.

It is possible to infer that Wilkinson's references to an American alliance were inspired by a desire to neutralize in the mind of the executive the storm of protest that his arbitrary career in New Orleans had aroused. If so, it proved largely ineffective. A like result followed his proposal for common action with Great Britain. The Chesapeake affair destroyed such a possibility. For a time it was doubtful if his vulnerable reputation could withstand the public execration aroused by the Burr trial, the congressional attacks urged on by John Randolph, and the investigation by a military court of inquiry. But in betraying Burr he had gained the support, if not the confidence of Jefferson, while his Spanish intermediary, Governor Vizente Folch of West Florida, almost perjured himself in his behalf.⁸ Thus he prospered far beyond his deserts, and resplendent in a coat of official whitewash, next appeared before his former Spanish paymasters, as the harbinger of a new day of freedom.

It is difficult to determine why Jefferson selected Wilkinson for this rôle. The general's own advocacy may have influenced him, but it is more likely that he also hoped to make the other break with his former Spanish accomplices. Very likely he doubted if Wilkinson had disproved the charges of corrupt dealings with the Spaniards. But the narrow escape from convic-

⁷ Wilkinson to Jefferson, March 12, 1807. Papers Relative to Burr's Conspiracy, manuscript in bureau of rolls and library, department of state.

⁸ *Report of the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Conduct of General Wilkinson, February 26, 1811* (Washington, 1811), 42-50. Ezekiel Bacon was chairman of the committee.

tion must have aroused feelings of repentance in his subordinate. By sending him on a mission that would be distasteful to his former bribers, the president might effectually remove him from further temptation of this sort. At the same time Wilkinson could serve as well as another to warn the Spanish colonial officials not to cultivate close commercial or political relations with Great Britain, and to proffer the friendly aid of the United States.

About a year after he had proposed that Great Britain and the United States should unite in favor of a New World policy, Wilkinson warned José Vidal, the Spanish vice consul at New Orleans, against the machinations of the former power. He announced the accession of Ferdinand VII to the throne of Spain and the presence of a French agent on the Mexican border. He then informed the other that the British officials were also planning a series of intrigues in the Spanish colonies, and desired the United States to make common cause with them. Should the latter refuse to coöperate they would carry on their propaganda alone, and would probably include in it an attack on the Floridas and even New Orleans.⁹ This possibility, together with the rumor that Burr was reviving his project, was sufficient to justify Wilkinson's warning. One suspects, however, that he may have designed it to assist the application that he had just made to Folch for an exculpatory letter to be used before the court of inquiry.

After this tribunal rendered its favorable but undeserved verdict, Wilkinson largely ceased to play the part of suppliant with his Spanish correspondents. In his letter to Governor Folch, August 25, 1808, he wrote that Spain was bound to fall under the control of Bonaparte. The Spanish colonies might then declare their independence under a new dynasty, with a new order of nobility in which Folch ought to have an important station. If talent for intrigue was a requirement, Folch certainly could meet it. The new nation would then have to decide whether to seek European or American alliance. At any rate, as he urged three weeks later, the Spanish colonies must defend

⁹ Inclosure in letter of Vidal to Iturrigaray, April 7, 1808. Marina, 1809 á 1814, Archivo General y Público de la Nación, Mexico. H. E. Bolton, *Guide to Materials for the History of the United States in the Principal Archives of Mexico* (Washington, 1913), 183.

themselves. The British could never prevent Spain from succumbing to Bonaparte, although they were extending their influence throughout her colonies wherever possible, and planning to control the whole of them. For the present Napoleon was paying no attention to this phase of the contest, but in the course of two years he would force England to make peace, ceding Spanish-America to him. When this region inevitably yielded itself, the conqueror would vigorously proscribe his enemies. So Wilkinson advised Folch to delay assuming sides. "In the meantime," he added, "save your province from any European power and let Someruelos take care of Cuba, which may slip into the hands of a false friend." To relieve his suggestion of selfishness he added: "My country must undoubtedly sympathize with Spanish-America and if called on will help her."¹⁰

In this warning about West Florida and Cuba Wilkinson had Jefferson's policy in mind. To his patron he now wrote in regard to the other project, expressing the "liveliest hopes" in the speedy emancipation of Mexico and South America. Possibly his hopes were lively because of his expressed desire to participate in this "glorious achievement."¹¹ He emphasized the desirability and necessity of an "excision of our transatlantic connections" by which "we should escape the allurements of inordinate wealth and the poisons of luxurious indulgence," and asserted: "Our acquaintance with the European World would gradually subside, fleets and Armies would insensibly become useless to a People of self government; and a persevering respect for ancient habits, and a fine adherence to principle, would perpetuate the freedom and happiness of the people of United America, to endless time." With this in mind he mentioned the credulity with which the "feeble uninformed Spaniards" were "surrendering themselves to the interested, officious interfer-

¹⁰ Inclosures in letter of Folch to Someruelos. Reservado No. 130, Papeles Procedentes de la Isla de Cuba, Legajo 1566, Archivo General de Indies, Seville. This source will be referred to as "Cuban Papers." The same material is found in Estado, Legajo 5550, Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid.

This correspondence was transmitted through Captain E. P. Gaines at Fort Stodert, whose suspicions were so thoroughly aroused, despite his friendship for Wilkinson, that he made the matter the subject of a personal letter to Jefferson, January 25, 1809.

¹¹ Wilkinson to Jefferson, October 1, 1808. Jefferson Papers, ser. 2, vol. 85:109.

ence of the British" from which Spanish-America was not likely to be exempt. He felt that agents should be sent to warn the Mexican authorities against these "insidious encroachments" and assure them of American sympathy and offered to convey this message to the Marqués de Someruelos, whom he knew personally. The marqués was "extremely feminine in his exterior, and of feeble intellect" and "without some seasonable counteraction on our part" the British might "cajole or frighten him" out of Cuba and the Floridas.

Wilkinson referred to the sentiments that the Mexicans had already expressed to Burling and to emphasize his own fitness for the proposed mission submitted a memorandum of his answers to some questions from Governor Herrera regarding the attitude of the United States towards Mexico. Wilkinson longed to obtain "some interesting appointment" which would enable him "by irrefragible evidence to strike dumb" his "slanderers and revilers." Probably this desire was strengthened by the recent suggestion of the secretary of war, made in connection with an order to ascertain the fate of some members of Pike's party, that the officer sent for this purpose should note the general effect that recent events in Europe had had on Mexico. Such events might produce results "highly interesting to the United States" and demand their "strict attention."¹² Thus influenced, Wilkinson composed a second letter to Herrera covertly suggesting common action in behalf of Spanish-American independence. At the same time he did not neglect his personal affairs, for he asked Herrera to disprove the calumnies of his enemies in regard to his relations with the Spaniards at the time of Burr's conspiracy.¹³

Early in November Wilkinson again assured Folch that the Spanish-Americans might count on the assistance of the United States. Despite newspaper reports to the contrary, ninety-nine out of a hundred of his fellow citizens felt the same. Their own affairs with Great Britain and with France were not in a flattering condition. The embargo was to continue under yet greater restrictions. But he piously hoped that God would favor the

¹² Secretary of war to Wilkinson, September 8, 1808. Inclosed under date of September 3, 1809. Manuscript in Letters Received, in war department.

¹³ Wilkinson to Herrera, October 12, 1808. Jefferson Papers, ser. 3, vol. 85:108.

cause of the just, in which number he included Folch's compatriots as well as his own.¹⁴

Wilkinson's language nettled Folch because of its prophecy if not its hypocrisy. In his reply he called the American's attention to the series of defeats that the Spanish people had recently inflicted upon the French armies, by virtue of which they might style themselves the Romans of the modern world. For this reason the United States should value their friendship above that of any other power; but he failed to convince the other. While the general still hoped, as every good patriot should, that Heaven would favor "the magnanimous sons of the Peninsula," he feared that the combined armies of Alexander and of Bonaparte would prove irresistible. The colonial leaders should prepare for such an untoward event as the fall of the mother country. Should this occur Spanish-America, united, organized, and in alliance with the United States, might bid defiance to all the warring nations of Europe.¹⁵ In this fashion the unsuspected Spanish pensioner assumes a Pan-American rôle that places his name among the earliest advocates of the Monroe Doctrine. We cannot escape this conclusion unless we prefer to believe that Jefferson inspired his utterances, and this would imply an intimacy between them that was of little credit to Jefferson. In his letter to Folch, Wilkinson expressed the hope that if his prophecy came true, Folch's "surpassing talents in political science" would receive adequate recognition. This reiterated wish aroused Folch's suspicion and led him to await with resentful curiosity their forthcoming interview. This was to take place as a result of Wilkinson's recent orders to assemble in New Orleans "as large a body of troops as possible."¹⁶

With his usual desire to make an impression Wilkinson wrote Folch that his force was to number seven thousand.¹⁷ It was not this fact alone that alarmed the Spanish governor. His suspicions were already aroused by the muster of the Orleans militia in keeping with the new military policy of the American government. He believed that that government had sold itself to

¹⁴ Cf. n. 10.

¹⁵ Cf. n. 10.

¹⁶ *Annals of Congress of the United States*, 11 Congress, 1 and 2 Session, 2:2435.

¹⁷ Cf. n. 10.

France in return for a promise of the Floridas and Canada, and that Wilkinson's explanation was a mere pretext to lull him and his fellow officials into fancied security. Moreover Wilkinson wrote that he bore a special mission from the president of the United States to Someruelos and to Folch, and he asked the latter to secure for him a favorable reception at Havana.

The fact that Wilkinson was charged with a special mission to them aroused the apprehensions of both officials. Wilkinson's former position as a Spanish pensioner rendered him all the more dangerous. Folch feared that he might now employ in favor of the United States all those measures that he had formerly advised Spain to use in curbing the former's territorial pretensions. Folch seemed to feel that his previous intimacy with Wilkinson might cast suspicion upon another interview between them. So he assured Someruelos that if any other than Wilkinson was to be the president's messenger, he should try to prevent him from coming to Pensacola. But he knew the American general so well and had the key to so many of his secrets, that he thought he could gain from him more than anyone else. Wilkinson believed him to be his friend and he had so acted on several occasions. The Spaniard regarded the general as a sort of fellow subject, who had suffered on account of his attachment to Spanish interests, but at the same time he claimed that the American lacked all qualities that could recommend him as a private individual.¹⁸

In reply Someruelos warned Folch to be circumspect in dealing with "No. 13," with whom in less critical times "His Majesty had some relations."¹⁹ He immediately asked the Mexican viceroy, Garibay, to assist him in defending the Floridas. Vidal had already informed the same official of the projected rendezvous of the American troops. He had explained this on the ground that the American government hoped to gain the Floridas through French influence or at any rate keep Great Britain from occupying them. Vidal and Someruelos likewise learned this latest news regarding their "inquiet neighbors the Anglo-Americans" from Foronda, the chargé representing the regency in the United States; and each in turn transmitted the new de-

¹⁸ Folch to Someruelos, January 26, 1809. Reservado No. 130; cf. n. 10.

¹⁹ Someruelos to Folch, February 28, 1809. Cuban Papers, Legajo 1566.

tails to Mexico. Vidal also informed Folch of his latest advices and surmises.²⁰ As a result of this double warning, frontier officials in the interior provinces of Mexico and in the Floridas prepared to make the best arrangement of their slender resources to meet the anticipated peril. The incident illustrates the completeness and intricacy of the Spanish system for transmitting information.

The hostile attitude of France and Great Britain furnished the pretext, if such were needed, for assembling this force in New Orleans. The government of the United States had already taken measures to increase its regular army and to mobilize the militia of the several states. Before the close of 1808 rumors became current that a large British fleet had been ordered from Halifax to the West Indies. The American press affected to believe that it was destined for the Floridas, and that it might even attack New Orleans. These reports, with rumors of the revival of Burr's conspiracy, and with reported British intrigues in Spanish-America, alarmed the American government. In reporting to their home authorities the Spanish and French representatives commented adversely upon these rumors and the consequent American precautions. Foronda asked the secretary of state to explain why the administration planned to concentrate four thousand men in New Orleans. He expected Madison to give an "oraacular response" only to his inquiry. Turreau told his government that the English were demanding the privilege of navigating the Mississippi to Baton Rouge but that he had warned the Americans not to permit Great Britain to become their neighbor in the south as well as in Canada.²¹

In due time the Spanish council of the regency at Seville turned its attention to the new problem afforded by the alleged hostile movements. Its members were persuaded that the United States was acting in accord with France. Secret emissaries of the latter power were already working in their colonies. It was true that Wilkinson, the designated commander at New Orleans,

²⁰ Vidal to Folch, January 26, 1809. Cuban Papers, Legajo 63. Vidal to Garibay, February 13, 1809. Estado, Legajo 5543, A. H. N. Someruelos to Garibay, February 12, 1809. Estado, Legajos 5543, 5550, A. H. N.

²¹ Foronda to captain-general of Cuba, January 6, 1809. Cuban Papers, Legajo 1708. Turreau to Champagny, January 13, 1809, May 1, 1809. *Affaires Étrangères, États-Unis*, 62:13, 142.

had once been a Spanish pensioner, but his recent part in Pike's expedition rendered him an object of suspicion. His ambition might lead him to excite insurrection in the Spanish provinces. Acting under their instructions their representative in London, Juan Ruiz de Apodaca, reported this movement in the United States as new evidence that the enemy of universal tranquility had brought that power under his influence. Canning instructed the new British minister, Francis James Jackson, to make vigorous representations on the subject.²²

In his dispatch, referred to above, Turreau charged that the new administration under Madison desired to gain the Floridas just as the preceding one had gained Louisiana. Jefferson, indeed, had suggested this idea in a letter to Monroe, January 28, 1809. He believed, though unwillingly, that Bonaparte would subdue Spain. This might lead him as well as Great Britain to relax their commercial exactions. With the mother country at his feet the conqueror would gaze longingly upon her colonies and try to purchase the neutrality of the United States by repealing her decrees and perhaps including the Floridas in the bargain. Monroe, however, did not believe that success in Spain and in her colonies would lead Napoleon to favor the United States in this manner.²³ The expression indicates that the president was willing to profit in this way even while he was urging these colonies to exclude Napoleonic and British influence alike from this continent. But a few weeks later he wrote his friend Dupont de Nemours: "All these concerns I am now leaving to be settled by my friend, Mr. Madison."²⁴

Meanwhile the man who was largely responsible for the anxiety of the Spaniards embarked at Baltimore on January 24, 1809, for New Orleans. He took with him fifty barrels of flour — an act which may have caused his superiors some misgivings, for the embargo was still in force. Such minor points as this and his request for an extra allowance on his expense account caused public criticism and rendered him a less useful agent for

²² Apodaca to Canning, May 18, 1809. Public Record Office, Foreign Office Records, Spain ser. 72, vol. 84. Apodaca to Garay, June 9, 1809. Estado, No. 197, Legajo 5559.

²³ Jefferson, *Writings* (Memorial ed.), 12:240; James Monroe, *Writings* (S. M. Hamilton ed. — New York, 1898-1903), 5:98.

²⁴ Jefferson, *Writings* (Memorial ed.), 12:259.

the delicate mission before him.²⁵ While at a public dinner at Norfolk he displayed his unfitness still more clearly, when he proposed the toast: "The New World, governed by itself and independent of the Old." Foronda promptly reported this to Someruelos as an additional reason for refusing him permission to land at Havana. Turreau carried his complaint directly to the department of state. Gallatin was instructed to tell him that the new administration must not be held responsible for Wilkinson's vagaries.²⁶

The American government was sending Wilkinson to Havana without a passport from Foronda. The Spanish chargé also warned the authorities against another of Jefferson's emissaries, "the assumed consul, Anderson." He hoped Someruelos would refuse to receive either and the captain-general wrote that he would do so. It was by conduct of this same Anderson that Wilkinson informed Someruelos of his proposed visit to Havana, to confer "on subjects of interest to our respective governments."²⁷ Bad weather detained him at Charleston for some weeks; and during this delay here, as well as at other stopping places, he displayed a lively interest in such personal matters as his future career, the new head of the war department, and the latest "vindictive efforts" of "Randolph and the black mouthed federalists." In addition to his enemies in his rear he looked forward with some perturbation to meeting Daniel Clark at New Orleans.²⁸

Wilkinson and his flour were conveyed from Charleston to Havana on the sloop of war *Hornet* which on March 23 reached the Cuban port. Here he found a series of riots in progress against its French residents. So great was the resentment against all foreigners that his aide-de-camp experienced some difficulty in presenting a personal request for audience with the captain-general. Despite the latter's assurance to Foronda, he formally received the American general and his suite. Possibly some of Wilkinson's flour aided in bringing about this conces-

²⁵ *Report on General Wilkinson*, 503, 545, 559, 563, 564. Cf. n. 8.

²⁶ Foronda to captain-general of Cuba, January 20, 1809. Cuban Papers, Legajo 1708. Turreau to Champagny, June 1, 1809. *Affaires Étrangères, États-Unis*, 62:194.

²⁷ Wilkinson to Someruelos, February 22, 1809. Cuban Papers, Legajo 1708.

²⁸ Wilkinson to Dearborn, January 2, 1809; Wilkinson to John Smith, chief clerk of the war department, March 12, 1809. Letters Received, war department.

sion. On the twenty-sixth the general gave Someruelos an unsigned note which the latter answered on the thirtieth. Disturbances within the city prevented further conferences, and on April 2 Wilkinson continued his voyage to New Orleans. Upon his departure Someruelos sent Garibay a new call for help which caused the officials of New Spain to renew their efforts at defense and adopt at their chief seaports a more intolerant attitude against foreign commerce.²⁹

What was there in Wilkinson's or rather Jefferson's communication to Someruelos to produce such a result? The misssive begins by expressing sympathy for Spain in its struggle for independent existence and regrets that the police regulations necessary to enforce the embargo had inconvenienced its "innocent neighbors." This suggestion of a difference between their attitude towards the colonies and the mother country is further emphasized by the statement that the United States cherished no antipathy against Spain and still less against "its immediate neighbors in the Western Hemisphere." In view of Wilkinson's later proposals to Vidal and to Folch we may regard this as designed to entice Someruelos into independent action; but the captain-general ignored it.

After this elaborate introduction of marked friendliness there follows a statement that Wilkinson was to reinforce New Orleans for the sole purpose of protecting recognized American territory. The United States neither intended nor desired to usurp any region occupied by Spain. For the present it would not even reopen its claim to West Florida. But if an "inimical power" attempted to use that territory in attacking the American possessions on the Mississippi or to disembark troops in East Florida, then the United States would "regard itself as authorized (without any hostile view against Spain or its interests) by well known principles in time of war, and by Natural law and the law of Nations, to oppose such an attempt by all possible means; counteracting the designs of its enemies by such movements and seizures as circumstances should dictate." Such was the message that Wilkinson was charged to deliver in the "true spirit of conciliation and good will." It will be observed

²⁹ Someruelos to Garibay, April 7, 1809. Estado, Legajo 5543, A. H. N.; also Cuban Papers, Legajo 1708.

that it closely follows Wilkinson's suggestions to the president.

The captain-general's natural impulse was to ignore this combined temptation and threat. The recent warnings of Folch and of Foronda impelled him to take the same course, and to inform his fellow officials of the impending danger. He answered Wilkinson that his missive suggested momentous diplomatic questions that only those "especially appointed for the purpose" could discuss. He mentioned the ruin that threatened most European peoples and warned against trusting the unnamed Corsican. He inclosed with his note a proclamation that he had lately used to arouse the people of Cuba. Thus he foiled Wilkinson's attempt either to seduce or to frighten him. The American general must then direct his efforts towards his whilom friends, Folch and Vidal.

The former was not in Pensacola when Wilkinson reached that port, for he had already transported himself to Baton Rouge, the anticipated scene of danger, just as he had done under similar circumstances in 1804 and in 1807. From the mouth of the Mississippi the general informed the new secretary of war that "the awfully critical situation of Spanish-America imperiously enjoins it on us to strengthen this feeble, remote and exposed quarter." He may have felt that Great Britain's forces in the West Indies constituted a serious menace, for he offered to seize West Florida before that power could do so. Perhaps he was not sure of the new administration's attitude despite what he had just told Someruelos. He suggested that this seizure might "affect Cuba and Mexico to our injury."³⁰ He may have feared that either Great Britain would then occupy Cuba or the Mexican authorities reject the proffered American alliance.

While Wilkinson was journeying towards New Orleans affairs in that city were shaping themselves to promote his mission. On March 19, Claiborne wrote the secretary of state that two officers, whom he regarded as Folch's personal representatives, had expressed their opinion that their country must shortly yield to Bonaparte. Thereupon the Spanish possessions would declare their independence. In that event they wished to know if the American government would receive a minister from Mexico? Claiborne guardedly replied that while he had no in-

³⁰ James Wilkinson, *Memoirs of My Own Times* (Philadelphia, 1816), 2:344-349.

structions to guide him, he thought the United States would gladly do so. His informants then stated that a certain Rendon had already been designated to represent Mexico in the United States, and a Spaniard of Irish extraction, Murphy by name, in Great Britain. These officers also intimated that under the new régime East and West Florida might be ceded to the United States, and they represented this as Folch's own view.³¹ It certainly differs from the sentiment expressed in his comments on Wilkinson's previous suggestions, but the wily Spaniard may have used this method to ascertain Claiborne's position on this and kindred topics. It might lead the Americans to take the initiative, when the conditions grew so bad that he could no longer hold his province, and thus relieve him of a certain responsibility to his own government. On the other hand Claiborne evidently wished to avoid committing himself even to the extent that Jefferson's letter of the previous October justified him in going.

The president evidently wished to be sure that the Spaniards learned of his intentions, for shortly after this interview Claiborne received from him instructions similar to those given Wilkinson. In this propaganda therefore the two men were to be closely associated, but the Orleans executive was not wholly in the dark as to the aims of his colleague as he had been on former occasions. This promised more benefit to the nation, if not to the latter's devious schemes. He therefore broached the matter to Vidal, the Spanish vice consul, who had already noted the arrival of American recruits in New Orleans. Vidal also knew that Wilkinson intended to call on Folch and Someruelos while on his way to that place. For some time he had tried in vain to learn the reason for these movements. In the latter part of March Claiborne called on him, in accordance with Jefferson's instructions, and readily explained the mystery.³²

The American executive assured Vidal that his government cherished the utmost good will for Spain and its colonies, despite discreditable reports to the contrary, and wished for the

³¹ Personal letter of Claiborne to secretary of state, March 19, 1809. Manuscript in Claiborne package in bureau of rolls and library. D. W. Parker, *Calendar of Papers in Washington Archives Relating to the Territories of the United States* (Washington, 1911), no. 7560.

³² Vidal to Garibay, April 10, 1809. Marina, 1809-1814. cf. n. 9.

mother country a happy outcome in its struggle against the "Tyrant of Europe." If, unhappily, the result should be otherwise, his superiors were ready to aid the colonies in every possible way, provided they preferred the rule of Ferdinand VII or of any other government than France. The president believed that the United States could do this without coöperating with "any other nation holding similar views." For this purpose it was ready to declare war against France and constitute itself the protector and ally of those colonies that were unwilling to follow the fate of the metropolis. If they desired to send an envoy to treat with his government, he would meet with a friendly reception and obtain marked favors for his constituents.

The vice consul thanked Claiborne for his friendly sentiments, but added that his government had not authorized him to discuss such delicate matters. Personally he believed that the Spanish colonies would never submit to a foreign power, nor forget their allegiance to Ferdinand VII or his heirs. Like the people of Old Spain too, those of New Spain were not unmindful of Great Britain's efforts in their behalf. The suggestion that that power must be included in the proposed diplomatic undertaking was not lost on the American representative. On the whole Vidal was much more circumspect in his attitude than Folch, although we must remember that he was making his own report, while Claiborne is narrating the statements of unofficial intermediaries. Yet Claiborne's later report based on a personal interview was of the same tenor.

In April the Orleans executive was at Pointe Coupée, opposite Baton Rouge; Folch was then at the latter place and immediately invited the other to dine with him. The governor is our only authority for what took place, for Folch himself evidently did not report this interview to Someruelos; yet we may be certain that he represents the Spaniard's professed views.

Folch thought that Spain still had a chance to oppose Bonaparte. In any event the colonies, especially Cuba and Mexico, would never recognize a dynasty that he supported, but upon the first intimation of Spain's fall, would proclaim their independence. Folch also professed to believe that the Floridas must inevitably pass into the possession of the United States, for they were of value only to that power. His offer to deliver to it his

own province a year and a half later is in keeping with this alleged opinion. Folch also expressed the resentment that the regency felt over the report that Joseph Bonaparte proposed to cede the Floridas to the United States. He suggested that his nation wished to cultivate friendly relations with the latter and had apprised Great Britain of this fact. He may have wished to intimate that the United States would profit more from the combined friendship of those two peoples than from its former subserviency to France.

In reply Claiborne stated that his country was intensely interested in Spain's struggle for independence, but its policy was not to interfere directly in European affairs. If Spain should be successful, the United States would acquiesce in her domination of Cuba and Mexico, but would regret to see them under the political or commercial control either of Great Britain or of France. These expressions are in harmony with those of Wilkinson and so closely follow Jefferson's previous suggestions that one need not seek further to find their author.³³

Folch, like Vidal, mentioned Spain's feeling of gratitude towards Great Britain, thus indicating that this sentiment had a common origin. But he did not think that that power would ever gain possession of the Spanish colonies. He admitted that Mexico and Cuba would need a foreign alliance to maintain their independence, and would probably approach both Great Britain and the United States on this subject, but preferably the latter. Claiborne mentioned the desire to exclude from this continent all European and particularly British and French influence as a guarantee that in their struggle for independence Mexico and Cuba might rely absolutely on the friendship of his country. He assured the other that these were his private views only, but they follow Jefferson's letter almost verbatim. Possibly he desired to rival the West Florida governor in finesse. Doubtless he was gratified when later at dinner Folch gave as his toast: "The liberty of the New World; may it never be assailed with success by the old World." Possibly Folch knew of Wilkinson's similar toast at Norfolk and was derisively paraphrasing it for his guest's benefit. The latter reported that the

³³ Personal letter of Claiborne to Smith, April 21, 1809. Parker, *Calendar of Papers*, no. 7567.

assembled company, largely composed of Spanish officials, received the toast with favor.

If, in New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Great Britain seemed the chief obstacle to a Pan-American alliance, France appeared in a similar light to the administration. Evidently Jefferson's books and his farm did not wholly suffice to occupy his attention in retirement, for, on April 19, he wrote to his successor: "I suppose the conquest of Spain will soon force a delicate question on you as to the Floridas and Cuba, which will offer themselves to you. Napoleon will certainly give his consent without difficulty to our receiving the Floridas, and with some difficulty possibly Cuba." Eight days later he added: "Napoleon ought to conciliate our good will because we can be an obstacle to the new career opening to him in the Spanish colonies." The Floridas alone would not be a sufficient reward for American neutrality. Our government would acquire them anyhow at the first outbreak of war and until then did not need them. Napoleon must also agree to the American acquisition of Cuba, if he wished a free hand in Mexico and the remaining colonies.³⁴ This implied doubt in regard to the outcome of Wilkinson's mission and a desire to secure American interests in any event. He wrote W. C. Nicholas that, in case Napoleon continued his commercial exactions, the people of Cuba and the Floridas might proffer themselves to the United States.

The situation had greatly changed since the preceding autumn. Then neither France nor Great Britain showed any disposition to compose its differences with the United States. Now Madison thought that the former was inclined to be more conciliatory. If, then, Napoleon should attempt to keep the United States from trading with the Spanish colonies, as it had formerly done with Santo Domingo, and should couple this requisition with an offer to cede the Floridas, it "would present a dilemma not very pleasant."³⁵ Evidently his ambition was not so great as his predecessor's who wished to mark our territorial pretensions to the southward by a column on the farther shore of Cuba. In Jefferson's view we could defend this region without a navy and this factor should determine our rule for expansion.

³⁴ Jefferson, *Writings* (Memorial ed.), 12:273, 277.

³⁵ James Madison, *Writings* (G. Hunt ed. — New York, 1900-1910), 8:53.

Turreau had already presented the unpleasant "dilemma" that Madison feared. Incensed at the repeal of the embargo, which, unaccompanied by a declaration of war, he regarded as a pro-British measure, he now demanded from the new administration an explanation of some other current rumors. One referred to a general project to revolutionize Spanish-America. Another specifically charged the American government with inciting secret assemblies in the Floridas, patterned after those that Miranda had organized in Caracas, and encouraging similar measures in Cuba. Finally the anxiety in regard to the British fleet at Halifax was simply a pretext to justify the concentration of troops at New Orleans. The French minister professed to believe that these reports were circulated by those who wished to sever the harmony existing between his nation and the United States, yet he had reported them to his court and awaited with interest an explicit answer from the American authorities.³⁶

The president had already written to Jefferson: "Cuba will, without doubt, be a cardinal object with Napoleon." Could he have seen Turreau's dispatch to Champagny of April 22, 1809, he would have been confirmed in this view and doubtful of the immediate future. The French minister claimed that the concentration of American troops in New Orleans under Wilkinson arose from a desire to coöperate with the independent party in the Floridas, rather than to defend that city against possible British attack. Wilkinson's visit to Havana gave point to an anonymous charge, which he attributed to a clerk in the state department, that the United States was sending revolutionary agents to Mexico, the Floridas, and Cuba. Turreau suggested that his government should use the riots in Cuba that had interfered with Wilkinson's mission as a pretext for the immediate seizure of that island. Having thus forestalled the Americans there, the French might later occupy the Floridas and Mexico.³⁷

After submitting his pointed inquiries of April 15, Turreau withdrew in a rage to Baltimore. Madison desired to avoid rupture with France and requested Gallatin to call on her minister on his way northward and explain the real sentiments of the administration. Evidently Gallatin believed that the presi-

³⁶ *Affaires Étrangères, États-Unis*, 62:123.

³⁷ *Affaires Étrangères, États-Unis*, 62:121, 122.

dent's views were the same as his own; otherwise, it will be difficult to reconcile Turreau's report of them, if correctly given, with Madison's later action.

Gallatin told the French minister that the administration disclaimed all responsibility for Wilkinson's utterance such as the Norfolk toast. This was to be attributed to "the vanity, the indiscretion and the ordinary inconsistencies of that General," whom the other knew as well as they. If Turreau imagined that Mr. Madison desired the Floridas, he was mistaken. That was Mr. Jefferson's hobby, but did not represent the views of his cabinet. The Floridas would be desirable only because their possession might prevent misunderstandings with Spain and secure an outlet for the southern states. The administration was in no way responsible for such popular meetings as had taken place there, and they had heard nothing in regard to Wilkinson's reception by the Spaniards. As for Cuba, the United States would not take it as a gift.³⁸

Gallatin's assurances evidently failed to convince the other. In reporting them Turreau called his superior's attention to the fact that they were accompanied by no favorable action in regard to a commercial policy. At the same time Secretary Smith instructed Armstrong at Paris to say that while it was the general policy of the United States to preserve neutrality towards the Spanish colonies, they would feel free to act otherwise, if necessary to preserve their territorial claims.³⁹ When the Erskine agreement resulted in a fiasco, Jefferson wrote Madison that if Bonaparte were wise enough to change his attitude toward the United States he must inevitably lead it to declare war against England. In that event he advised the immediate occupation of Baton Rouge in order to forestall the British. Our claim to this territory would justify the step.⁴⁰

The inconsistencies of Jefferson's and Madison's commercial policy thus characterize their attitude towards Spanish-America and even the neighboring West Florida. Jefferson was ready to assist a revolt in the Spanish colonies, should Bonaparte dom-

³⁸ Adams, *History of the United States*, 5:37, 38.

³⁹ Smith to Armstrong, May 8, 1809. Instructions, vol. 7, manuscript in bureau of indexes and archives.

⁴⁰ Jefferson, *Writings* (Memorial ed.), 12:304.

inate Spain. For this he expected the Floridas as his reward. Hence, his desire to open diplomatic relations with them, even through the untrustworthy Wilkinson. At the same time if Bonaparte should pursue a more favorable commercial policy towards us, he might purchase our neutrality in respect to his own Spanish-American plans, by the bribe of the same Floridas with Cuba included. His own cabinet did not seem to approve his views, but he persisted in setting them on foot, and even exerted pressure on his successor to continue them. On assuming office, the latter promptly repudiated them, but ere his first administration was half completed, he was exerting powerful efforts to gain both the Floridas, and at the same time truckling to Bonaparte.

Meanwhile the unconscious if not innocent object of so much report and conjecture reached New Orleans. His long delayed arrival represents a distinct anticlimax to what might have proved an interesting diplomatic episode. Wilkinson's interviews with his former friends Vidal and Foleh were as fruitless as his brief visit to Havana. To the former he immediately reported the substance of his communication to Captain-General Someruelos. This did not differ materially from what Claiborne had already told the vice consul about the proposed Pan-American alliance. In reply Vidal repeated what he had previously said to the governor — that Spanish-America would probably follow the lead of the mother country and preserve friendly relations with Great Britain. Consequently any hostility between that power and the United States might be an obstacle to the proposed Pan-American alliance.

Wilkinson claimed to represent the sentiments of the administration and now told Vidal that he expected his country and Great Britain to compose their differences and declare war against France. In that case there would be no objection to including Great Britain in the proposed alliance. He may have had some intimation of the Erskine correspondence upon which to base his assertion. Vidal was inclined to believe that Wilkinson correctly reported the attitude of his government, for unless the British nation was a party to the suggested alliance, the United States would be more than ever exposed to European

machinations. Yet he felt that the western world as a whole was reasonably safe from European invasion. He even suggested that the death of the tyrant or some other accident might afford the united and grateful Spanish colonies an opportunity to rescue the mother country from captivity.⁴¹

We have as yet no complete evidence that Jefferson instructed Wilkinson to propose a Pan-American alliance to the Spanish officials that he visited. His cabinet had tentatively suggested such a policy before he ordered Wilkinson to New Orleans. That general had more than hinted at it and was only too anxious to receive instructions to carry it out. His communications to Someruelos suggest that he had them in reserve but the riots in Havana and the captain-general's attitude gave him no chance to present them. The case was otherwise in New Orleans where his former friends not only gave him the opportunity but even partly suggested the subject matter of his discourse.

It is likewise possible that Wilkinson first definitely heard of the proposed alliance from Vidal and Claiborne, after his arrival in New Orleans. Owing to the lack of discipline among his troops and the havoc already wrought by disease it would be a useless proceeding to assure the Spanish authorities that they had nothing to apprehend from the military forces in New Orleans. They already knew that for themselves. On the other hand the condition of these forces afforded his enemies another opportunity to attack him, and they quickly took advantage of it. Accordingly he must employ every possible means to strengthen his tottering influence. He attacked his enemies for seeking to discourage enlistments or to persuade his officers to resign. He appealed to the Spaniards in the interior provinces for additional testimony in his favor. At the same time he suggested to the administration a comprehensive plan for immediately occupying West Florida and defending New Orleans. In his extremity the suggested alliance offered still another possibility of redeeming himself. He was fully instructed to interview Folch on another subject. He would add to it the proposed alliance, appeal to their former friendship, tempt the governor's personal ambition, and lead him to place himself at the head of this

⁴¹ Inclosure no. 2 in letter of Vidal to Garibay, April 10, 1809. Cf. n. 32.

new movement. Vidal had suggested the necessity of including Great Britain in this alliance, and although without definite instructions on this point, he incorporated it in his proposal. By this means he would inaugurate a deservedly popular movement, in the glory of which he might be safe from his most persistent foes.

In pursuit of this plan, therefore, Wilkinson met Folch at the San Juan bridge, April 28, and conducted him in a carriage to the government house in New Orleans. In the course of their ride together, as he tells us in two separate accounts, they conversed on the fate of Spain and the future interests of her colonies. He reported that Folch fully expected Bonaparte to triumph over Spain, but before that event he hoped the junta would direct him to deliver West Florida to the United States. Mexico must then seek to preserve her independence either by joining the United States or forming a confederation of her own. This is in keeping with Claiborne's previous report of the governor's attitude. Perhaps Wilkinson used this to fabricate the whole interview, or else Folch was playing with him as he had with the Orleans executive.

When Folch mentioned the possibility of a Spanish-American confederation, Wilkinson remarked that to it the Floridas would form a "feeble and pernicious appendage." Folch assented and stated in case the junta did not act as he hoped, he would apply to the viceroy of Mexico for power to surrender West Florida; failing in that, to the president himself. He declared that Great Britain should never get the province, for it was "as necessary to the United States as the drawer is to the case." The astonished Wilkinson observed that "the subject presented a solid ground of Conciliation and mutual Confidence," between their countries, which he would gladly promote. Folch declared that he had never before uttered this idea, but it follows so closely his interview with Claiborne in Baton Rouge that one is tempted still more to regard that as the real source of Wilkinson's reports. The general closes by advising his superiors to send an agent immediately to confer with Folch on the surrender of his province,⁴² which he suggested might be hastened by "an

⁴² J. W. to Madison, May 1, 1809. *Calendar of the Correspondence of James*

indemnity" to its officials. This was a natural but sinister suggestion in view of the charges already pending against the general.

If we are inclined to regard as genuine this report of the interview between Wilkinson and Folch, we may find evidence to corroborate it in Claiborne's contemporary correspondence. The latter wrote that while Folch was in New Orleans he freely expressed himself as favoring the independence of Spanish-America. He also conveyed the impression that most of his fellow officials entertained the same views. Claiborne, however, doubted if the people were prepared for such a step. They were "deplorably ignorant, unusually superstitious, for the most part poor, indolent and easily controlled by their priests." Any attempt on their part at self government, therefore, would be followed by "scenes affecting to humanity." The anarchy then prevailing in Havana suggested the possibility of reënacting there another Santo Domingo.

Claiborne thought that neither Mexico nor Cuba single handed could long maintain its independence. With the people soon losing their enthusiasm it would be impossible to keep them out of the clutches of France or Great Britain. In such a contingency the latter might demand a commercial monopoly as its reward and this course would prove as injurious as the rule of Joseph Bonaparte. Claiborne felt that it would be impossible to maintain much longer the policy of neutrality that the United States had hitherto observed between the rival factions in Spain. "The interest of the United States requires that all European influence should be banished from the continent of America," he echoed, and "the present crisis is favorable to the accomplishment of so desirable an object." He closed by stating that he forebore to advise the government further.⁴³ It was well that he did so, for he was simply paraphrasing Jefferson's missive of the preceding October.

Folch's own letters to his superiors are filled with strong expression of loyalty to Ferdinand VII, and he offered to serve

Madison (Washington, 1894-1895), 726; also 38 Miscellaneous Letters, filed under date of January 1, 1813, in bureau of indexes and archives.

⁴³ Claiborne to Smith, May 14, 1809. Claiborne Correspondence, 5. Parker, *Calendar of Papers*, no. 7567.

Spain against the invader. These letters and his own subsequent course certainly show him in no sense as a champion of Spanish-American independence. Yet it is probable that the reports of Wilkinson and Claiborne in regard to his willingness to deliver West Florida may have some foundation, for a year and a half later he actually made such an offer. It is likely, too, that when his offer came, the administration conceived extravagant hopes from it based on his earlier conversations with these American officials. On the other hand it is equally likely that, while conferring with them, the Spaniard knowingly conveyed more than his real views. He despised Claiborne and distrusted Wilkinson, and may have thought himself justified in deceiving them and the government they represented. From it, if not from its immediate agents, he apprehended the most immediate peril to his dominions.

So far as his letters from New Orleans are concerned, one might infer that Wilkinson's mission was simply to reassure him upon this point. The general delivered to him a communication similar to the one already given Someruelos, to explain the assembling of American troops at New Orleans. Folch admitted that this movement had caused him some anxiety, appreciated the good intentions of the United States, and assured Wilkinson that his own were friendly.⁴⁴ When, however, Folch returned to Pensacola, he unbosomed himself to his superior. His letter on this occasion clearly shows that Wilkinson's elaborate explanation of the presence of troops in New Orleans was largely a pretext suggested by Jefferson to conceal their real purpose — the opening of diplomatic relations with the Spanish colonies.

Wilkinson tried to show Folch, so the latter wrote, that Spain was bound to succumb to Bonaparte. According to Claiborne's report the Spanish governor already believed this, but he obviously did not wish his superior to think so. In such an event it would be highly desirable to form an alliance to include Spanish-America, Brazil, the United States, and, if necessary, England. The addition of the last-named power was probably an

⁴⁴ Wilkinson to Folch, May 3, 1809; Folch to Wilkinson, May 4, 1809. J. A. Robertson, *List of Documents in Spanish Archives . . . of Which Transcripts are Preserved in American Libraries* (Washington, 1910), nos. 5168, 5169.

after-thought inspired by the interviews with Vidal, or by preliminary information in regard to the abortive Erskine convention. In case the Spanish colonies declared their independence, it would be desirable for them to have an agent near the United States, and Folch himself would most acceptably fill that office because he knew so thoroughly all the factors involved. This additional evidence afforded by Wilkinson's interview with the Spanish governor serves as a link in Jefferson's policy and explains the general's correspondence of the preceding autumn.

Folch told Wilkinson, so he wrote Someruelos,⁴⁵ that while he felt flattered at this expression of confidence in himself, he thought that children ought not to be in haste to divide a parent's property before her death. Furthermore he had no intention of beginning a policy that he could not carry through. Believing that both Wilkinson and Claiborne represented the ideas of their government, he pointed out to his superior that the proposed alliance might serve to rescue the mother country from Bonaparte. Possibly he desired thus to protect himself, should any report of his views as given to Claiborne or to Wilkinson chance to reach Someruelos. Folch assured the latter that America, well governed and united, would be inaccessible to Bonaparte. Should his ambitions tempt him, the voyage would mark the beginning of his overthrow and the climate, its end. The Corsican, however, would hardly venture to repeat on so extensive a scale his experience in Santo Domingo, yet the governor assured the captain general that he was ready to act against him as Someruelos might desire.

In communicating Folch's dispatches to his superiors, Someruelos observed that he was unable to appreciate Folch's conversations with Claiborne and with Wilkinson, for that official had not reported them in sufficient detail. He advised the governor to remedy his reports in that respect. He also expressed his surprise that Folch had ventured to discuss such delicate subjects and advised him to shun this course in the future, for the Americans simply desired to draw out the views of the Spaniards and later turn them to their advantage. The uniform reply to suggestions for independence and alliance should be that

⁴⁵ Folch to Someruelos, May 23, 1809. Robertson, *List of Documents*, no. 5170.

the Spaniards would die to preserve the union of the two Americas with Spain.⁴⁶

Despite the firmness of tone that Someruelos assumed towards his superiors, or that Folch employed with him, there is a suggestion that each believed that a speedy catastrophe was inevitable, but wished to shield himself from any responsibility for it. Folch also attempted to play off Claiborne against Wilkinson in an endeavor to ascertain if both correctly reported the attitude of their superiors, while Vidal evidently worked with him to the same end. At the same time Folch expressed himself so as to arouse American hopes in regard to the Floridas and establish his influence with their officials in case he had to rely upon them in an extremity. In this way in the crisis of 1810-1811, he managed through the American authorities to preserve Mobile from a filibustering expedition, and at the same time remained in good standing with his superiors. Such was the influence of the Florida question that it led American and Spanish officials alike to adopt a shifting course of duplicity.

That this influence was marked in the case of Wilkinson is shown by his communication of May 12 to the secretary of war. Folch was still in the city and his own army disorganized, but he suggested an elaborate plan to defend the region, of which West Florida constituted the danger point.⁴⁷ A week later, after the Spanish governor had left New Orleans but before he had reached Pensacola, Wilkinson reported that a "commotion" threatened to break out in that city. Folch was likely to call upon him for assistance. He might be overthrown either "by the usurpation of the Spanish subjects or by the enterprise of the American settlers." In view of possible public advantage he wished to receive instructions at the earliest possible moment.⁴⁸ In reply the secretary of war wrote him, July 22, 1809: "It is the continued wish and instruction of the president that no interference of any kind in the affairs and territories of Spain should take place, or be encouraged, or permitted, by any person or persons, whether civil or military belonging to or under the

⁴⁶ Someruelos to G. F. O., October 8, 1809. Cuban Papers, Legajo 157.

⁴⁷ Wilkinson, *Memoirs*, 2:351.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:357.

authority of the United States.”⁴⁹ Evidently the protests of the French minister were beginning to affect the administration, although Canning’s repudiation of the Erskine agreement contributed to the same end and warned it not to complicate its foreign policy further. Thus ended the first effort of the United States to initiate a Pan-American policy. Jefferson, in retirement, could not force his successor to continue his mistaken policy, nor support his unworthy protégé. The latter was obliged to resign his command and come northward in an unavailing attempt to clear himself from charges of inefficiency as well as of personal corruption.

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⁴⁹ Wilkinson to N. Salcedo, August 31, 1809. MSS. Internas Provincias Internas, vol. 239, Expediente 2, p. 33, Archivo General, Mexico.